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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAR ES SALAAM 000801

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TZ](#)

SUBJECT: Zanzibar Registration Crisis Averted for
Now

Classified by Pol-Econ Chief Judy Buelow for reason
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Dar es Salaam 711, D) Dar es Salaam 551

11. (C) Summary: The Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC) is taking concrete action to fix the problems that have plagued voter registration, and Zanzibar's recalcitrant political leaders have rather grudgingly indicated they will allow the ZEC a free hand to do so. From April 18-20, Diplomatic Heads of Mission from donor countries called on Zanzibari political leaders to transmit a common message urging respect for the ZEC and for the legally established registration procedures. After an April 21 meeting to exchange information on the weeks' events, the Diplomatic Group agreed that, for now at least, the credibility crisis for the Zanzibari voters register has been averted. The Diplomats nonetheless believed that Zanzibar would continue to lurch from one crisis to the next until election day. The Heads of Mission plan monthly visits to Zanzibar, to call on political leaders and reiterate the message. End Summary.

The Diplomatic Group: Seeking the Right Strategy

12. (C) In their April 15 meeting at UNDP headquarters (please see Reftel A), the Diplomatic Group assessed worrisome trends in voter registration, and agreed on a common message to be delivered to influential Zanzibar political leaders. The final version of the message contains eleven points, which in their most succinct form can be summarized as follows: urge all stakeholders to support the ZEC and allow the ZEC to conduct registration in accordance with the law; urge the political parties to show restraint and commitment to non-violence, and to revive inter-party dialogue.

13. (SBU) Over the next several days, small groups of diplomats conducted a series of meeting with the political leaders who are thought to be particularly influential, for better or for worse, in Zanzibar's registration process. On April 19, the High Commissioners of Canada and the UK, together with the UNDP Resident Representative, traveled to Zanzibar to call on the Acting Minister for Good Governance Shamhuna and the ZEC Elections Director Khamis Ame. On April 20, the Nordic Ambassadors delivered their message to Zanzibar President Amani Abeid Karume, during a previously scheduled meeting to follow up on Karume's recent trip to the region. CUF party Secretary General (and beleaguered candidate for the Zanzibar Presidency) Seif Sharif Hamad met with the British and Canadian High Commissioners and a group of Nordic Ambassadors. On April 21, the Diplomatic Group reconvened at UNDP headquarters to exchange information on the meetings, to assess developments, and plan their next steps.

CCM, CUF Leaders: Saying the Right Things

14. (C) The separate meetings with CCM party hardliners Shamhuna and Karume went as well as could be expected. Initially, Acting Minister of Good Governance Shamhuna indulged in some venting against the opposition CUF party. He also defended the shehas, the local government administrators who have been blatantly, and illegally, usurping ZEC authority in the Registration Centers of Urban West Region. However, Shamhuna said that he would brief President Karume and Chief Minister Nahodha about the eleven point message. He also said that he would call in the District and Regional Commissioners (the shehas' superiors in the government's chain of command) so they could remind the shehas that their residential lists must be open

to ZEC scrutiny and that the shehas had no authority to deny people registration. Shamhuna agreed that inter-party dialogue might help ease tensions on Zanzibar. He said it would be helpful to revive the Secretaries General Committee, consisting of CCM

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Secretary General Phillip Mangula and his CUF

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counterpart Seif Sharif Hamad. (A historical note: the Secretaries General met several times before the Pemba by-elections of May, 2003. Their joint announcement on the voting rights of members of the security forces did more than any other single event to defuse tension and ensure the by-elections were peaceful.)

15. (C) Zanzibar President Karume appeared well-briefed on the problems with voter registration, saying that he agreed with the recent report by the election-observation NGO "TEMCO." Karume blamed insubordinate shehas who did not understand registration procedures, implying that any problems originated far below his pay grade. Karume refrained from criticizing the ZEC, and said that he "couldn't agree more" about the need to respect the ZEC's authority to conduct registration and elections. He assured the Heads of Mission that the Zanzibari government would not interfere with the registration process. President Karume agreed that inter-party dialogue could help defuse the current tensions; he even suggested establishing a telephone "hotline" between leaders of the ruling CCM party and the opposition CUF.

16. (C) Seeking to be even-handed, some Heads of Mission met with CUF Party Secretary General Seif Sharif Hamad, to urge that political opposition also respect the ZEC's role in coordinating voter registration. The consensus in the Diplomatic Group is that Hamad and the CUF party are far more "sinned against than sinning," in the confrontations accompanying voter registration. Nonetheless, in the mass rally called April 17 to protest the denial of Hamad's registration, Hamad had made unhelpful remarks, saying that the CUF party mistrusted the ZEC and would publish its own election results. The diplomats reminded Hamad that only the ZEC had the legal authority to announce the outcome of the election, and that the opposition had the most to gain from adhering to the legal procedures. Hamad took these points. Regarding the call for inter-party dialogue, Hamad said that for the last ten months, he had sought a meeting with his CCM counterpart, Secretary General Phillip Mangula, but that the CCM appeared reluctant to revive the Secretaries' General Committee.

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ZEC: Doing the Right Things

17. (C) On April 19, the visiting Heads of Mission found that ZEC Elections Director Khamis Ame was planning concrete, practical measures to set the troubled registration process right. First, higher levels of the ZEC were reviewing the denial of Hamad's registration, which even many CCM supporters considered to be politicized and unfair. (Days later, the ZEC reversed the original decision and allowed Hamad to register.) Khamis reported that the ZEC had also withdrawn credentials from two shehas who had consistently interfered with the registration process, denying the shehas access to the registration centers, and sending a warning to other shehas who might overstep their authority.

18. (U) Most importantly, the ZEC was addressing the problem of the thousands of individuals, most of them presumably opposition supporters, who had been arbitrarily denied registration or the right to appeal. Khamis said the ZEC would extend registration in Urban West Region at least through April 26, and had the authority to extend registration for as long as was necessary to ensure all eligible Zanzibaris had the opportunity to register. (The extension period includes a weekend and the April 26 Union Day holiday. This may facilitate registration for Zanzibaris with jobs, who have found it difficult to spare up to nine hours to wait in line at the registration centers.) Finally, the ZEC intends to set up a special table at each center for the sole purpose of distributing form 2-D to people who have been denied registration and assisting them to initiate their appeals.

19. (C) Khamis said that the ZEC would also start to publish statistics detailing the numbers of registrations, denials and objections in each district. The diplomats received this information enthusiastically, noting that the publication of district-level data would help build the credibility of the register among the political parties and the general public. (As an example, the British High Commissioner later observed that the objection process is now complete in the two regions of Pemba Island, which had its share of registration controversies. The ZEC demonstrated competence and professionalism on Pemba, where 157,000 voters registered and objections numbered a respectable, and manageable, 2,442.) The Heads of Mission urged ZEC officials to meet with party leaders and other stakeholders, and to publicize the ZEC's voter registration efforts more widely. Khamis, who became the scapegoat for the troubles in Zanzibar's previous elections, nonetheless hesitated to raise the ZEC's profile further at this time.

The Diplomatic Group: Keeping Everything on Track

10. (C) British High Commissioner voiced the consensus when he told the Diplomatic Group that Zanzibar's voter registration appeared to be back on the right track, for now. Pocock said that he nonetheless thought it likely that Zanzibar would continue to lurch from one crisis to the next until Election Day in October. In a suggestion that was generally well-received, Pocock suggested that Heads of Mission from the Diplomatic Group plan to travel to Zanzibar at least monthly to meet with political leaders. He thought diplomatic group should continue to reiterate the eleven points, until circumstances dictated that the message be revised and updated. The Diplomatic Group agreed that every Heads of Mission visit to Zanzibar should include a call on the ZEC, both to obtain regular updates on the elections preparations and to demonstrate diplomatic support for the Commission.

11. (C) The next round of calls for the Heads of Mission is set for April 26, on the margins of Union Day events in Dodoma. Charge d'Affaires Stillman will join the High Commissioners of the UK and Canada for meetings with Minister of Home Affairs Omar Mapuri and CCM Secretary General Phillip Mangula. The Diplomatic Group hopes to persuade these national level leaders of the CCM party to be part of the solution to the problem of restoring credibility to the Zanzibar voter register. Mapuri, in addition to his Home Affairs portfolio, is a Zanzibari who helped negotiate and implement the bipartisan Muafaka Accord on behalf of the ruling CCM party. When conflict marred voter registration on Pemba Island last December, Mapuri helped to restore calm with a public call for the militias to respect the authority of the police and the ZEC. Mapuri said all the right things in public, even though he reportedly faced harsh criticism in private from CCM hardliners. CCM Secretary General Phillip Managula is an old-fashioned CCM loyalist, and the other half of the Secretaries General Committee which was so helpful in ensuring the 2003 Pemba by-elections were free, fair and peaceful.

12. (C) Comment: These latest discussions with Elections Director Khamis Ame demonstrate once again that the ZEC has technical expertise and a real commitment to conducting a credible election. Clearly, Khamis knows what to do to correct the distortions that threaten the credibility of the voters register. The question that still remains is whether the ZEC's many working-level officials can actually defy the shehas, and implement these measures in the 82 registration centers of Urban West Region. It also remains to be seen if political leaders will help the ZEC to rebuild public confidence in the voter register. In particular, the ZEC must effectively reach out to those citizens -- likely numbering at least several thousand -- who have been denied registration and the due process to file an appeal. The diplomatic Group must continue to monitor the situation on the ground, and continue to address the new problems and controversies that will inevitably develop. End comment.

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